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ABSTRACT

Noting that starting school is a major milestone for young children as well as for their parents, this activity booklet provides a read-aloud story for parents to share with their children to help them feel confident and comfortable in school. The story features the Public Broadcasting System characters Arthur and his sister D.W., and includes suggested questions for parents to ask their children. The booklet also contains a drawing activity for parents and children to do together and suggests books with stories about school. Tips for parents include the following: (1) encourage your children to talk about school; (2) admire your children's creativity and effort; (3) get involved in your children's education; and (4) speak up if there is a problem. The booklet concludes with specific suggestions for parents of preschool and kindergarten children and for children in grades one through three. (KB)

Feeling Good about School

AN ACTIVITY BOOKLET FOR PARENTS AND KIDS

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Ever feel worried or upset
about school? Look inside
for a story, an activity, and
some good tips for parents.



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Dear Parents,

Starting school is a major milestone for our children, and for us. As we watch them enter this new world, we know they will face challenges, learn an enormous amount, and hopefully have fun.

Helping our children feel confident and comfortable at school is a goal we all share. On the ARTHUR show, we try to give kids ideas about how they can cope with everything from class bullies to tough teachers to mysterious cafeteria food. This Activity Booklet can be another helpful tool. It contains a story, "D.W. All Fired Up," activities for you and your kids to do together, and parenting tips and information.

We hope you continue to enjoy watching ARTHUR as he, D.W., and their friends cope with the many challenges of school.

Sincerely,

Carol Greenwald

Executive Producer, ARTHUR

Watch ARTHUR[®]
on PBS[®]. It's on
every weekday!



Arthur D.W. All Fired Up

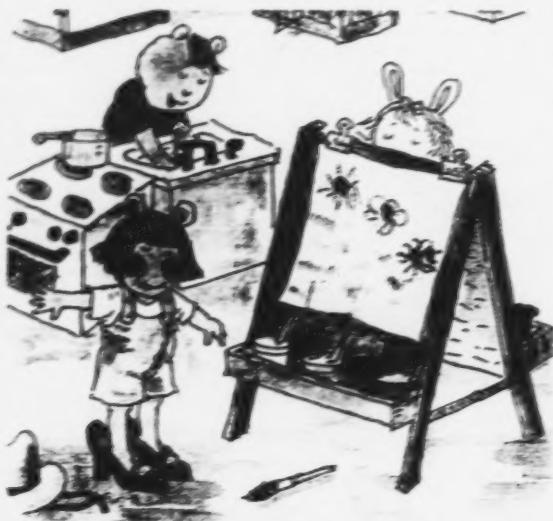
Adapted from the ARTHUR PBS Series

A
Read-Aloud
Story for
Parents and
Kids

One day Ms. Morgan, D.W.'s teacher, makes an announcement.

"We're going to have a fire drill," she says. "Line up at the door. We need to practice so we'll know what to do if we have a real fire."

"What?" says D.W. to Tommy Tibble. "Did she say we're going to have a real fire?"



Outside, the kids practice rolling on the grass.

"This is what you do when your clothes catch on fire," Tommy explains to D.W.

"My clothes are going to be on fire?" asks D.W. She waves her hand.

"Ms. Morgan! There's some stuff about this fire drill I'd like to clear up."

"Don't worry, D.W.," says Ms. Morgan. "We'll talk about fire safety all week."

But D.W. does worry. She thinks about smoke and flames all day. And when she goes to bed that night, she has a bad dream about a fire in her bedroom.

The next morning, on the way to school, D.W. says, "Mommy, I don't want to go to school." "Why not, D.W.?" asks Mom. "Did something happen that made you feel bad?"



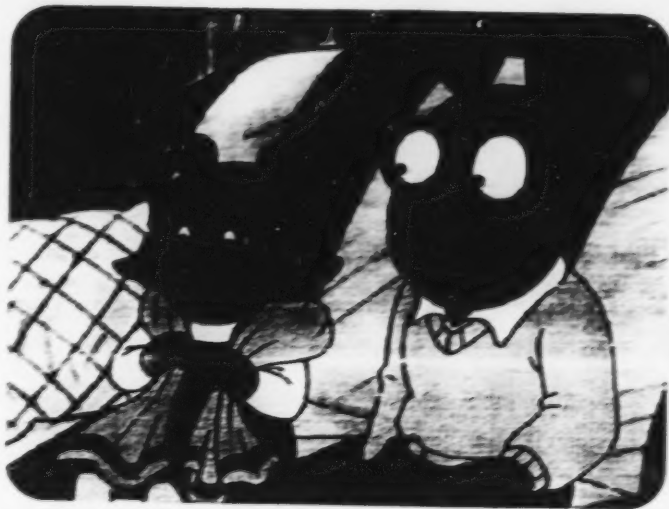
"It's this stupid fire drill. I don't want to do it." "But fire drills are important, honey," says Mom. "Would you like me to go to school with you and stay for awhile?" "No," says D.W. glumly. "Never mind."



After school, Dad has a surprise. "Here's a firefighter hat and a whistle for you, D.W. You are now the Official Fire Warden of the Read household." D.W. helps her family do fire drills all afternoon.

"You see, D.W., fire drills aren't bad," says Arthur. "I was scared about my first fire drill, too. But you don't have to worry. They don't really set the school on fire."

D.W. isn't convinced. "That was in the olden days when you were in preschool. Things have changed, Arthur!" she says.



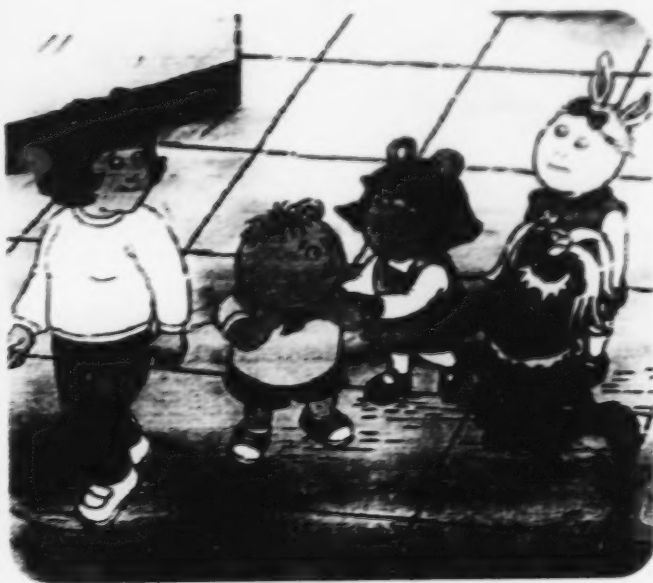
What do you think is going to happen?

At school the next day, D.W. is worried. When will the fire drill be? During circle time? During snack? Finally, it happens. DONG! DONG! DONG! rings the fire alarm.

"Fire drill, everyone. You know what to do," says Ms. Morgan.



D.W. takes charge. "Come on, guys. Quickly and quietly! Don't take anything with you," she says.



D.W. helps the kids stay calm as they file out of the school and line up at the fence. "Good work, class!" says Ms. Morgan. "You've just completed your first fire drill."

"You mean that's it?" asks D.W. "It's over?"
"That's it, D.W.," says Ms. Morgan. "And thanks for your help."

"Sure, Ms. Morgan. No problem," says D.W. "Are we going to have another fire drill tomorrow? Or maybe we should have a volcano drill. Or a tidal wave drill. We have to be ready for anything, you know!"



Ask Your Kids:

- Have you ever worried about something that was going to happen in school? What was it?
- Did anyone help you feel less worried? What did they do or say?
- What other new things at your school surprised you or made you nervous?



Watch ARTHUR!

Watch these ARTHUR shows with your children, or ask them to tell you the story. It's a good way to start a conversation about getting along in school. You can find these ARTHUR home videos at your library, video store, or bookstore. Read the books, too!

Arthur Writes a Story

Arthur's friends all have great ideas for stories. But what can Arthur write about? All his ideas feel boring.

ASK YOUR CHILD:

- What is Arthur's first idea for a story? Why does he change his idea?
- What do you do when you are having trouble with school work?
- If you were going to write a story about something from your life, what would you write about?

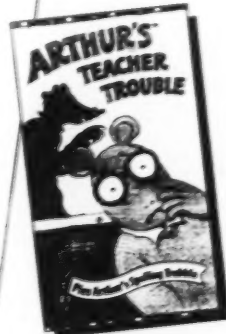


Arthur's Teacher Trouble

Mr. Ratburn, the strictest teacher in the school, turns out to be not so bad after all.

ASK YOUR CHILD:

- What new thing do Arthur and Buster discover about Mr. Ratburn?
- How does that change their feelings about him?
- Who is your favorite teacher? What do you like about that teacher?



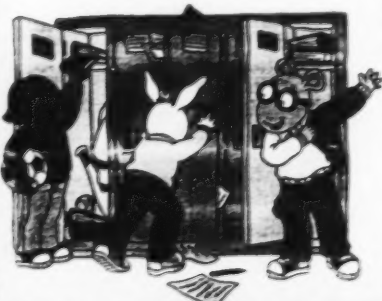
School Stories

Great!

This is a Draw-and-Tell activity for kids and parents to do together.

Each of you will think about a great time you had in school. (Think back, parents!) Then think about a time that was not so great.

- 1 Cut out the picture frames.
- 2 Draw a picture on each side.
- 3 Tell each other the story behind each picture.
 - What happened?
 - How did you feel?
 - What might you do differently if the "not so great" situation happened again?



Not So Great



Not So Great



Great!



Read On!

Life in the classroom is often funny. It can also be frustrating. Enjoy these school stories with your children. You may be reminded of similar experiences from your own lives!



The Beast in Ms. Rooney's Room
by Patricia Reilly Giff. (Yearling Books) Richard "Beast" Best has to repeat second grade. Can anything make the year bearable? (Ages 5-8)



Friends at School by Rochelle Bunnett. (Star Bright Books) What do you do at school? The lively photos in this book are a great way to start conversations about life at school. (Ages 3-6)



Gettin' through Thursday
by Melrose Cooper. (Lee & Low Books) When André makes the third-grade honor roll, his family finds lots of ways to celebrate. (Ages 5-8)



Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse
by Kevin Henkes. (Greenwillow) Lilly loves her teacher until he takes away her musical purse. Then she is furious! (Ages 4-7)

photo: Lisa Tetter

For Parents

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Tips for Parents: School

Let your children know that you think school is important and that you are proud of how they are learning and growing. Try some of these ideas.

1 Encourage your kids to talk about school.

- Let them tell you about school friends, class work, and what happens during the day.
- Ask them about the rules in school and the reasons for the rules. How are they the same as the rules in your home? How are they different?
- When your children complain about problems, listen with sympathy but try not to make judgments. Remember there are always several sides to a story.

2 Admire your kids' creativity and effort.

- Praise your kids for their willingness to try new and difficult things. This willingness will help them succeed in school and in life.
- Praise their hard work and good behavior. Don't place too much of an emphasis on grades.

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Get involved in your children's education.

- Find ways to help out in your kids' school. When possible, go to school events or spend time in their classroom.
- Get to know your children's teachers. A friendly, respectful relationship between you and the teacher sends an important message to your child. It also makes it easier for you to work together if a problem arises.



Speak up if there's a problem.

- If your child's attitude toward school changes suddenly, it may be a sign of a problem.
- Try to find out what's bothering your child. You may be able to help your child figure out a way to solve the problem. Or you may decide that you need to step in and help.
- Contact your child's teacher to arrange a time to talk or meet. Listen to each other's point of view. It often helps to get specific information: *Can you give me an example of what happens?*

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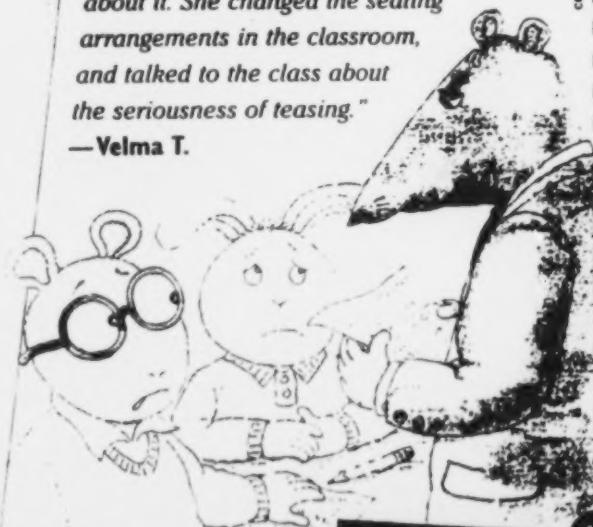
PARENTS' CORNER

"I help my daughter with her homework and reading. I think this helps her be more interested in school."—Ivelisse M.

"It's important to give your children the attention they deserve when they ask you questions or share something about school. If you never have time to listen to them, they lose trust and stop talking to you."—Ingrid C.

"In fourth grade, my son was being tormented by three boys. He stopped participating in class and his grades dropped. I spoke to the teacher about it. She changed the seating arrangements in the classroom, and talked to the class about the seriousness of teasing."

—Velma T.



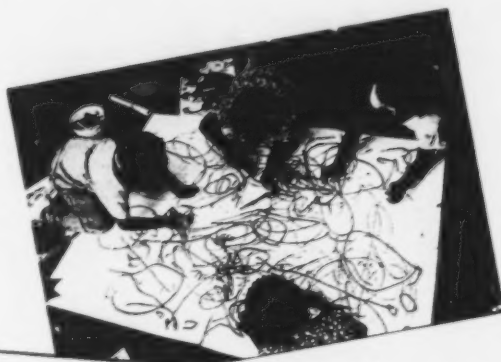
For Parents

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center photo: Lisa Turner

Ages and Stages

At times, your kids may feel anxious or upset about school. You can help them deal with school stress by listening to them, respecting their feelings, and offering your support.



Preschool and Kindergarten

Young children often feel anxious about being separated from their parents when they go to school.

YOU CAN

- Talk about things you know your child will enjoy at school. For example, *You'll do lots of painting. And you'll meet new friends.*
- Ask the teacher if your child may bring something special from home, like a tiny toy. The teacher may suggest other ways to help your child feel comfortable at school.
- Tell your child that you'll soon be back together. Describe what happens at the end of the school day. That will help your child know when it's almost time to see you again.

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Grades 1-3

School-age kids may feel anxious about homework, tests, and reports. They often worry about fitting in or being made fun of by their classmates.

YOU CAN

- Work with your child to develop good study habits at home. Find a quiet area where your child can work. Set aside time to do homework.
- Help your child understand that making mistakes is part of learning. Tell stories about mistakes you made when you were in school.
- If your child is being teased, listen and sympathize. Then talk about some of the things that make your child a terrific, interesting kid. You might ask, *What do you think you can do when kids tease, so that you aren't so hurt by their mean words?*



- If the teasing continues to be upsetting, you and your child should talk to the teacher. Work together to resolve the problem. The school principal and guidance counselor may also be able to help.

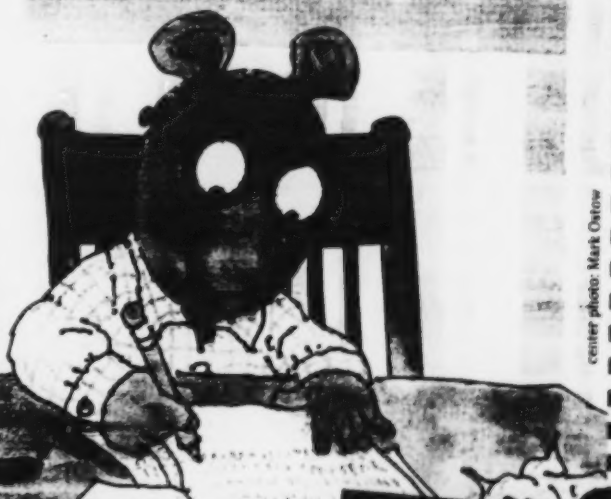
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PARENTS' CORNER

"My daughter cried and cried when I left her at preschool. Later at home, when she was relaxed, we used her dolls and toys to act out things kids do at school. I showed how moms and dads come to fetch their kids and take them home to play, eat, and sleep. It helped."—Diane C.

"My son had stomachaches every morning before school. It turned out that he was having trouble in math. He felt worried and upset. We talked with his teacher. She gave us some math games to play with him at home, and she gave him a little extra help in the classroom."—Cyrus J.



center photo: Mark Ostrow

For Parents

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This guide was produced by the Educational Print and Outreach department of WGBH.

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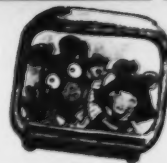


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